



PRESS-REGISTER

Speaker raves on downtown Mobile

Thursday, August 28, 2008

By DAN MURTAUGH

Staff Reporter

The RSA Tower, historic homes on Government Street and oak-lined streets are all assets that downtown Mobile should develop around, British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell said Wednesday.

Campbell, also a former mayor of Vancouver, Canada, spoke to a packed Moonlight Grand Ballroom at the Battle House Hotel at the annual meeting of the Downtown Mobile Alliance.

Among the attendees were Mobile Mayor Sam Jones and City Councilman Fred Richardson.

Campbell explained how city leaders in Vancouver were able to redevelop that city into one that consistently is rated among the most livable in the world by promoting dense residential developments, such as high-rise condominium buildings, in the downtown area.

"A downtown is not lively because you're in an office," he said. "It's lively because you come out of that office, and you do things on the street."

Vancouver has also avoided putting freeways in the downtown area, Campbell said. About 62 percent of the trips in downtown Vancouver are made by walking, he said, which leads to safer streets and better public health.

Mobile city leaders need to plan what they want their city to look like in 20 years, Campbell said, and then start enacting policies to bring that vision to fruition.

He said the historic "heritage buildings" are a great asset to downtown Mobile, as are the lovely streetscapes. He said he was also impressed with the RSA Tower, Mobile's tallest building, which opened two years ago.

"This would be a spectacular building anywhere," he said. "It pulled me in. You can see it from anywhere, and you know that's where downtown is."

©2008

© 2008 al.com All Rights Reserved.